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Fresno Woman Pleads Guilty to Stealing Almost \$400,000 in Federal Retirement Benefits Intended for Her Deceased Father

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that PATRICIA JEANNE DUNNE, 58, of Fresno, pleaded guilty today to one count of mail fraud, and aiding and abetting involving a retirement benefits fraud scheme that dated back to 1985. The guilty plea was entered before United States District Judge Oliver W. Wanger, in Fresno, California.

This case is the product of an extensive/joint investigation by the United States Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations; and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Sherrill A. Carvalho, who is prosecuting the case, the defendant defrauded the Social Security Administration and Defense Finance and Accounting Service by allowing federal retirement benefits intended for her father to continue to be deposited into a joint bank account following his death in 1985. In addition, DUNNE admitted to lying in a letter she mailed to the Social Security Administration in 2002, in which she claimed to be her father in an attempt to convince officials that her father was still alive so that the benefits intended for her father, and to which she was not entitled, would continue to be deposited in her joint account. DUNNE admitted that she stole approximately \$125,922.20 in Social Security retirement benefits and approximately \$234,033.39 in U.S. Navy military retirement payments, for a total theft in the amount of approximately \$359,955.59.

The maximum penalty under federal law for mail fraud is twenty years and a fine of \$250,000. In addition, she could be ordered to pay restitution of up to \$359,955.59.

Sentencing is scheduled for March 20, 2006 at 1:30 before Judge Oliver W. Wanger.

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